

The Blackfeet tribe has been working for better access to quality water and a better livelihood for decades. In 1989, the tribe initiated negotiations with the Montana Compact Commission. Shortly thereafter in 1990, the Department of the Interior appointed a Federal negotiation team to assist in achieving a negotiated settlement of the tribe's reserved water rights claims. The State of Montana and the tribe then reached an agreement in 2007 in the form of a compact which settled the tribe's water rights to avoid costly litigation, allow the tribe to build and repair much-needed water infrastructure, and protect access to water for neighboring communities like Birch Creek water users off the reservation.

On March 16, 2009, the Montana State House passed the agreement by an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 87-12, and on March 20, 2009, the Montana State Senate passed the agreement by a nearly unanimous vote of 48-2. Critical to ensuring strong bipartisan support in the State legislature was ensuring potential impacts to all water users could be adequately mitigated pursuant to the Birch Creek Agreement. Federal legislation to authorize the Compact was first introduced in 2010 and has been reintroduced every Congress since, including in the 114th Congress by Senator TESTER and myself and Representative ZINKE. Since its initial introduction, the administration has been negotiating with the tribe and the State to resolve important Federal concerns relating to cost, cost sharing, Federal interests, and Federal responsibilities. On February 3, 2016, the legislation passed the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs for the first time, marking the first committee vote on Indian water rights legislation in more than 5 years. On May 24, 2016, the House Committee on Natural Resources held a hearing on the legislation, and on July 22, 2016, the Department of the Interior and Justice issued a letter to House Natural Resources Committee Chairman ROB BISHOP certifying that enacting the much needed Blackfeet Water Rights Settlement Act was a net benefit for the American taxpayer.

On November 15, 2016, through the diligence of the entire Montana delegation, the House Committee on Natural Resources passed the legislation out of committee, and on September 15, 2016, the Senate passed the legislation as part of the Water Resources Development Act. Today's action, final passage of S. 612, the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act, marks the first time legislation authorizing the water rights settlement has passed both Chambers of Congress. Indeed, it has been a long road for this water compact. I am proud to get it over the finish line today.

The Blackfeet water settlement will not only establish the tribe's water rights but will also facilitate real, tangible benefits for the Blackfeet and surrounding communities. The bill will

improve six significant drainages and several Federal water structures that are some of the oldest and most in need of repair in the country. The compact will also keep wildlife and fish habitat healthier and municipal water supplies cleaner. Furthermore, it upholds agreements by the State that will strengthen irrigation for neighboring farmlands called Montana's golden triangle for its wheat, barley, and hay production.

In order to ensure nearby productive farmlands remain productive well into the future, early drafts of the Federal legislation provided funding for the Four Horns infrastructure and for a mitigation fund for Pondera County Canal and Reservoir Company, PCCRC, and other water users on Birch Creek. As farming investment decisions require certainty for the long-term, these funds remain necessary to ensure neighboring families have the certainty necessary to mitigate any impacts if the tribe's ability to exercise its Birch Creek water rights impact communities' access to water.

In 2015, the State, tribe, and PCCRC agreed to additional changes to the legislation to address the Department of the Interior's position that the Federal Government should not provide mitigation funds as a matter of Federal policy, and as a result, Federal mitigation funding was eliminated from the Federal legislation.

I appreciate the State of Montana's commitment to ensure that potential impacts to Birch Creek water users will be fully mitigated by the State as called for by the Birch Creek Agreement and the Blackfeet Water Compact. I trust that the State of Montana will uphold this commitment, as doing so remains an important aspect of the passage and implementation of the Blackfeet Water Rights Settlement.

I also recognize that Blackfeet Nation is not the only Indian tribe to hold reserved water rights in the Milk River Basin. The Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Community have long awaited settlement of their water rights as well. This bill includes language to protect the ability for the two Tribes to reach an agreement regarding each Tribe's rights on the Milk River, and I look forward to working with stakeholders on an agreement moving forward.

I commend the Blackfeet Tribe and Chairman Harry Barnes, who have been diligent and patient in seeing this settlement forward. I commend our State for its commitment to the Blackfeet tribe and Indian Country in Montana.

I am thrilled to get this through Congress and look forward to the President's signature and to working with the tribe and local community next year to finally put it into action, starting with securing the Federal funding necessary to ensure much-needed water infrastructure authorized in this settlement becomes a reality.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I wish to applaud the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act. This week, the Senate overwhelmingly passed the NDAA Conference Report, and I am proud that the final bill includes my Fairness for Veterans provision.

We have far too many servicemembers who are suffering from trauma related conditions like posttraumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury. Unfortunately, many of these servicemembers have received a less-than-honorable discharge, instead of the help and assistance they have earned. Last year, I introduced the Fairness for Veterans Act. I am proud to say that a modified version of that bill was included as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act.

The Peters provision ensures liberal consideration will be given to petitions for changes in characterization of service related to PTSD or TBI before discharge review boards. It also clarifies that PTSD or TBI claims that are related to military sexual trauma should also receive liberal consideration.

I would like to thank my colleagues—Senators DAINES, TILLIS, and GILLIBRAND—for joining me in leading the charge on this very important issue. In addition to being a bipartisan effort, this has also been a bicameral effort. I would like to thank Representatives MIKE COFFMAN of Colorado and TIM WALZ of Minnesota who introduced the companion bill in the House and have supported the NDAA provision.

Additionally, I would like to thank the many veteran service organizations that advocated tirelessly on behalf of this legislation. These organizations knocked on doors, wrote letters, held press conferences—whatever it took to have their voices heard.

I would like to recognize Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Disabled Veterans of America, Military Officers Association of America, the American Legion, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, United Soldiers and Sailors of America, and Swords to Plowshares.

Finally, I would like to thank one veteran in particular: Kristopher Goldsmith. After serving his country, Kris faced his own struggles with PTSD after serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Determined, Kris has channeled his personal struggles into advocacy on behalf of his fellow veterans. He was relentless in his quest to ensure that former servicemembers looking to get a change in service characterization had a fair shot. I thank Kris for his service, as well as for his determination.

Servicemembers who are coping with invisible wounds inflicted during their service and receive a related bad paper discharge should not lose access to benefits they have rightfully earned. That is why we must ensure all veterans get

the fair process they deserve when petitioning for a change in characterization of their discharge. Fairness for Veterans will do just that.

While I am proud that the final NDAA bill includes Fairness for Veterans—make no mistake—there is still a great deal more work to be done. I will continue working with the Defense Department to ensure that discharge review boards are providing the appropriate consideration when reviewing PTSD and TBI related appeals.

I applaud the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act, and I intend to continue fighting on behalf of our Nation's veterans. Thank you.

LEGISLATION OBJECTION

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, in accordance with my policy to put a notice in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD whenever I place a hold on legislation, I object to any unanimous consent request to pass H.R. 6438, a bill to extend the waiver of limitations with respect to excluding from gross income amounts received by wrongfully incarcerated individuals. I object not because I disagree with the policy underlying this proposal—in fact, I support it—but because the Senate cannot pass this singular bill ignore the long list of other tax proposals that are outstanding or expiring at end of this Congress; among them clean energy and infrastructure incentives that create good-paying jobs, an education incentive that makes a college degree more affordable, provisions to make homes more affordable to the middle class and protect struggling homeowners from a tax bill if they negotiate mortgage debt relief.

DACA

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I wish today to speak about the need to protect undocumented young people, commonly referred to as DREAMers, from deportation by preserving the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, or DACA.

President-Elect Trump has threatened to eliminate the program, which would have serious consequences for families and communities across the United States, particularly those in California.

That is why I join my colleagues in the Senate to urge that President-Elect Trump allow young people to continue to study, work, and live in our country.

The DACA program was announced by President Obama in 2012. It temporarily halts the threat of deportation for undocumented young people who were brought to the United States as children before their 16th birthday.

DACA also provides the opportunity to obtain work permits and the documents often required to enroll in college.

Around 750,000 young people have been admitted to the program, allow-

ing them to come out of the shadows and make incredible contributions to their communities.

Nearly half of DREAMers—370,000—live, work and are educated in California. They are an essential part of the fabric of our communities and it is so important for people and the President-Elect to know the very real, human side to this issue.

I would like to begin with the story of one talented and ambitious Californian who has taken full advantage of the opportunity she had been given by the DACA program.

Denisse Rojas arrived in the United States when she was just 10 months old, brought here from Mexico. Like many of our immigrant ancestors, her parents wanted to make a better life for her and her siblings.

Denisse's family is similar to many undocumented families in California. After arriving in Fremont, CA, her father worked full-time in a restaurant while pursuing his high school diploma at night.

Her mother attended community college part-time for 7 years to earn her nursing degree. Denisse excelled in high school, graduating with a 4.3 GPA. She attended U.C. Berkeley, one of the top public universities in the Nation, to study biology and sociology.

Denisse dreamed of going to medical school, driven in part by a family member's early death from cancer. The disease was diagnosed at a late stage because the family's immigration status made it impossible to afford health insurance.

Denisse worked as a waitress and commuted an hour each way to classes because she couldn't afford to live on campus. After graduation, she volunteered at San Francisco General Hospital.

Today, Denisse is attending medical school in New York at one of the country's top programs, and she is on track to earn her degree in 2019. To help other students navigate the admissions process and pursue careers in health and medicine, Denisse cofounded a national nonprofit organization called Pre-Health Dreamers.

Pre-Health Dreamers has connected an incredible network of students, and I would like to introduce you to just a couple of them: Oscar Hernandez is a medical student at U.C. Irvine. He grew up in San Diego's Barrio Logan neighborhood and received his bachelor's degree in physiology and neuroscience from U.C. San Diego. Oscar is being specially trained to address the unique challenges in providing health care to California's Latino communities—a growing need in our State.

Seung Lee is a medical student at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. His family immigrated to the United States from South Korea in 1998. Seung is also pursuing a career in medicine because he wants to help reduce inequality by increasing access to health care in his community.

Through Pre-Health Dreamers, Denisse has helped bring Oscar, Seung,

and many other students together as they work toward their goals.

After graduation, Denisse intends to specialize in emergency medicine and work in low-income communities to provide health care to families like her own that too often go without needed treatment. Parts of California, particularly our rural communities, are very short on doctors. We desperately need people like Denisse who want to work in communities most in need of skilled health care professionals.

Without the DACA program, Denisse wouldn't be able to obtain the license required to practice medicine. She would not have the proper work authorization or accompanying documents. And our country would be denied a highly qualified, motivated doctor.

DREAMers are also working in classrooms across the country. Jaime Ballesteros came to the United States from the Philippines when he was 11 years old.

He excelled in school but knew that being undocumented would make it much harder to go to college.

Jaime's English teacher encouraged him to pursue private scholarships, and he enrolled in Drew University, a top school for teachers.

Jamie was admitted into the DACA program during his junior year of college. He obtained a work permit and said filing his taxes for the first time was "one of the happiest days of my life."

Jamie wanted to give back to students facing the same challenges he did, and he joined Teach for America. Today he serves as a 7th grade science teacher at KIPP Academy of Innovation, a STEM charter middle school in east Los Angeles.

Now, I would like to explain the application process these young people go through. They need to pay a nearly \$500 application fee and provide a wide range of documents to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services showing their identity; proof they came to the United States before their 16th birthday; proof that they were present in United States on June 15, 2012; proof that they have continuously lived in United States since June 15, 2007; and confirmation that they are or have been students or honorably discharged military veterans. Potential DACA recipients must also undergo a criminal background check, during which fingerprints and photographs may be collected. Those with felony convictions or three or more misdemeanors are ineligible for the program. Once approved, DREAMers must reapply every 2 years. The renewal process allows the Department of Homeland Security to ensure young people still meet the program's requirements.

Despite the program's success, exemplified by young people like Denisse, Oscar, Seung, Jamie, and many others, President-Elect Trump has threatened to immediately rescind the program. There is a very real fear that DREAMers and their families could be targeted